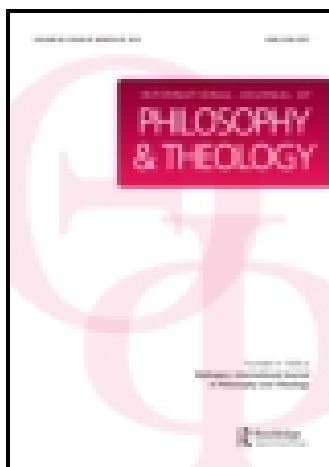


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The concept of Aufhebung in the thought of Merold Westphal: appropriation and recontextualization

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The concept of *Aufhebung* in the thought of Merold Westphal: appropriation and recontextualization

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Merold Westphal's method often consists in recontextualizing, or appropriating, various sources in order to either make his own argument or to make other's arguments seem self-evident. This method is especially noteworthy in his use of *Aufhebung*, a term which he initially discovers in his early work on Hegel. Westphal will eventually appropriate this term and, as this article will show, utilize it throughout his other academic works, particularly in his reading of Kierkegaard, for many an 'anti-dialectical' thinker. This article further explores Westphal's use of the term in order to reveal that his utilization of the term extends beyond Hegel's own original intention and that, in doing so, Westphal creates something quite unique and separate from the term itself: a '*Westphalian Aufhebung*.'

Keywords: Merold Westphal; Søren Kierkegaard; G.W.F. Hegel; recontextualization; postmodern philosophy; philosophy of religion

Merold Westphal is well respected in the field of Hegel scholarship, yet is not a Hegelian. His work on Kierkegaard is equally respected, and while one can rightly call him a Kierkegaardian, it would be at the cost of delimiting his expansive work to one – albeit important – aspect of his thought. Likewise, Westphal is wrongly considered a postmodernist, even though he grapples with postmodern thought and contemporary philosophy of religion. For Westphal, we are still as much modern as we are postmodern.¹ So what are we to make of Westphal and how he enters into these debates? Moreover, in the context of understanding his work as a whole, how does Westphal *utilize* these debates to progress his own point of view?

William Desmond offers us insight into these questions where he describes Westphal's thought as a gentle despoilment of the Egyptians. His fidelity to his sources superficially appears to be an acceptance of their thought only to actually become, not just a critique, but a piecemeal acquisition of certain aspects of said source's thought.² It is not a hostile takeover – it is not a takeover at all – rather, it is a form of retrieval: he takes parts of an author's idea while diligently critiquing the idea as a whole. A charitable reading of this would call it a recontextualization, but perhaps calling it a 'gentle despoilment' is more honest.³

Nowhere is this more evident in Westphal's thought than it is with his reading of Hegel and his use of *Aufhebung*. As Desmond notes, Westphal will take this contentious term and, in a gentle despoilment, he will make it do all sorts of 'productive, indeed benign, work for him.'⁴ Westphal's most productive use of *Aufhebung* comes from his reading of Kierkegaard, particularly when describing Kierkegaard's concept of the

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teleological suspension. On several occasions and in varying contexts, Westphal will equate the two terms as meaning the same thing, which not only shows how greatly Hegel has influenced Westphal's thought but it also reveals that what Westphal has taken is not just Hegel's terminology, but the *structure* and *foundation* of Hegel's thought as well.⁵ Westphal's despoilment of Hegel is, in other words, not a robbery but a particular type of recontextualization – perhaps a *reconstitution* – of Hegelian concepts into a different project altogether.

In what follows, we will explore whether or not Westphal's use of *Aufhebung* is indeed such an instance of this type of recontextualization. This is important for understanding Westphal's philosophy of religion for three reasons: First, it will show how much Hegel has influenced Westphal's thought in general, which makes a further exploration of Westphal's critique of Hegel all the more necessary. Second, it will problematize Westphal's fidelity to the text itself by revealing the (hermeneutical) gap between the text in question and Westphal's reception of the text. While this is true of all readers of texts, it is important nonetheless for understanding Westphal since much of his own thought revolves around placing other authors into dialogue, and thus placing a priority on the text's authority itself. This is particularly true with his use of Scripture. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, this will give us an insight into the way in which this type of recontextualization works within all of Westphal's thought. By looking at one key example, we can thereby better understand how Westphal's dialogue between texts and authors builds toward a central idea, while also negating aspects of his dialogue partners' thinking. In short, his dialogues often function as '*Westphalian Aufhebung*.'⁶

We will therefore set out to prove this thesis by first exploring the complicated nature and use of *Aufhebung* in Hegel's own work. Once we have a grasp on what is admittedly a tricky word, let alone concept, then we will explore and compare Westphal's own use of the term. We will see the differences in usage by first exploring how Westphal uses the term in his Hegelian writings – proving that he has a solid grasp of how Hegel used the term himself – and how he uses it with Kierkegaard – proving that Westphal's own use of the term does something similar yet different from Hegel's use of the term. We will then conclude by analyzing how Westphal's use of the Hegelian *Aufhebung* reveals the way in which Westphal goes about recontextualizing his sources, lifting them up – or despoiling them, if you prefer – into his own thought.

Hegel's use of *Aufhebung*

Aufhebung is a common German word which in and of itself is not a philosophical term, yet its meaning quickly lends itself into becoming one. *Aufhebung*, in its common usage, means to cancel out something while also simultaneously picking it up, and yet this overly simple definition does not completely contain its everyday use in German nor is its usage by Hegel. Therefore, we must begin by unpacking the term itself. As Ralph Palm notes, its trickiness in Hegel's works confounds several scholars, particularly translators of Hegel into English, who do not know whether to translate it into suspension, sublation, or simply to leave it in the German form.⁷ While suspension does not quite do justice to the negation involved in *Aufhebung*, sublation's usage in English is all but obsolete, thus rendering it little to no help in explaining the word's meaning. Likewise, keeping it in its German form can appear to be ducking the question regarding its meaning while also causing headaches between the German–English grammatical crossover. For example, you thus have to choose whether to use *Aufhebung* – meaning 'sublation' – or *aufheben* – meaning 'to sublimate' – or even *aufgehoben* – meaning 'sublated.'⁸

Moving toward Hegel's own conception of the term, we notice that he explains it only in four sections, the most important being in *Science of Logic*, within the first chapter of Book One, entitled 'The Doctrine of Being.'⁹ Here in an additional remark (*Zusatz*), Hegel refers to its everyday German usage in which there is a preservation – the picking up can be seen as a form of preserving – while also a cessation, but what matters most to him is the simultaneity of this action; it is not an 'if-then' movement but a double action. 'That which is sublated,' remarks Hegel, 'is thus something *at the same time* preserved, something that has lost its immediacy but has not come to nothing.'¹⁰ As Walter Kaufmann notes, this is akin to picking up a fallen book off of the floor and putting it on a shelf: you have removed the book from its present state – the negative or cancelling action – while also having preserved its condition – the positive or preservative action.¹¹ However, this explanation only goes so far, given that after Hegel notes the double action within *Aufhebung* he goes on to add a third element to the term: that it not only cancels yet preserves, but it also *elevates* the object in question. He does this through contrasting *Aufhebung* with the related, but etymologically distinct, Latin term, *tollere*.¹² *Tollere* here means to take or lift up, as in the book upon the shelf, but *aufheben*, through its negating act, goes one step further and implies an *elevation* of the book's concept, its 'bookness,' into something else altogether. More exactly, Hegel characterizes *tollere* as merely an affirmative action, whereas *aufheben* involves the unity of affirmation and negation. Something is taken away in the act, which makes *aufheben* a much more impactful concept given that the object in question (within the *Aufhebung*) is no longer the same.

While *Aufhebung* is directly related to the dialectic – Palm goes so far as to call it 'the heart of the dialectic' – it should be understood also as its own distinct, speculative (i.e. infinite) term.¹³ This is perhaps best seen through Hegel's concept of becoming found within being and nothingness, the topic which Hegel himself is addressing in *Science of Logic* and in which he brings up the reflection upon *Aufhebung* in the first place. Therefore, let us pivot our examination of *Aufhebung* toward his concept of becoming in order to better grasp the meaning of this term. However, it is important to note that since our interest is not in Hegel's concept of becoming, our treatment of this concept will be all too brief and simplistic and will focus primarily on *Aufhebung* and not the larger implications of Hegel's thought.

For Hegel, being (*Sein*) begins with a concept of 'pure being' (*reine Sein*), which is distinct from any concept of determinate being, where existence takes shape and forms into a thing unto itself.¹⁴ In other words, before there is 'a being' (determinate being), there must be a general concept of 'pure being,' indeterminate and unconstructed, from which 'a being' emerges. Pure being, according to Hegel, cannot have 'any determination with respect to another, so too it cannot have any within;' it is devoid of content and thus has no mediated distinction with/against an other.¹⁵ Any distinction or determination would thus render it into something else, 'a being,' which would exist with other beings (from which it is distinct and determined).

Interestingly, this sounds much like nothingness except for one great difference: the intuitive *meaning* behind the concept of nothingness. To be exact, Hegel calls this 'pure nothingness,' which he goes on to describe as 'complete emptiness, complete absence of determination and content; lack of all distinction within.'¹⁶ So far, pure being and pure nothingness sound like the same thing; however, to think of nothing intuitively a meaning – even if it is the absence of meaning. 'So,' Hegel concludes, 'nothing *is* [i.e. it concretely exists] in our intuiting or thinking; or rather it is the empty intuiting and thinking itself, like being.'¹⁷ Paradoxically, this renders pure being and pure nothing as the same – both are indeterminate and empty – but yet they are different in respects to their intuitive

meaning and therefore they are not the same.¹⁸ Pure being intuits an existence – however indeterminate – while pure nothingness intuits an absence of existence.

This paradox exists because of the unity within pure being and nothing. This unity, however, dissolves in an instant when pure being ‘passes over’ pure nothingness in its becoming determinate being.¹⁹ As far as becoming is concerned, the ‘purity’ of being is thus negated through this passing over into determinate being. Hegel plainly sees that his notion of being and nothingness coming together to create ‘a being’ is paradoxical and astonishing to most – mainly because some may fail to see the relationship between indeterminacy and determinacy. So, to clarify, he remarks how this paradox correlates to various creation motifs and concepts of existence within Christianity, which uses similar *ex nihilo* concepts, and Buddhism, which emphasizes a similar notion of indeterminate nothingness.²⁰ Let us turn now to how paradoxes function as a transitional aspect of his logic and its relationship to *Aufhebung*.

As Palm notes, the key to understanding the paradox of pure being and pure nothing becoming a determinate being is noticing the location of the paradox within the transition (or becoming) itself.²¹ In becoming, two things happen: (1) pure, indeterminate being and nothing are distinct and opposing yet also the same, and, as such, they (2) immediately proceed to cancel out the contradiction of the paradox (their ‘opposite-yet-the-sameness’) while preserving and forming a determinate being. As Hegel states:

But the truth is . . . that they *are the not the same*, that they are absolutely distinct yet equally unseparated and inseparable, and that *each immediately vanishes into its opposite*. Their truth is therefore this *movement* of the immediate vanishing of the one into the other: *becoming*, a movement in which the two are distinguished but by a distinction which has just immediately dissolved itself.²²

Pure being and pure nothing’s co-existence *immediately* causes a reaction which becomes something new, a distinct determinate being. This unity is better understood through its double sense: at the level of sameness they are an abstract unity (*abstrakte Einheit*) and at the moment of union, in their becoming, they are a determinate union (*bestimmte Einheit*). Therefore, in their becoming, or unifying, being and nothing’s indeterminacy is removed – their ‘pureness’ is taken away or ceased – as being passes over nothing into becoming something: a determinate, distinct, and individual being. This, for Hegel, is a moment of sublation (or *Aufhebung*): ‘In this unity, therefore, *they are*, but as vanishing, only as *sublated*. They sink from their initially represented *self-subsistence* into moments which are *still distinguished* but at the same time sublated.’²³

Aufhebung, therefore, is what makes this process of becoming a determinate being possible or, more exactly, it is the key to explaining what happens *in* becoming a determinate being. The ‘in’ here is operative because it is important to note that the *Aufhebung* is not an external happening but that it happens within the unity of being and nothing; there are no outside influences or forces causing the negation. Pure being and pure nothing, Palm remarks, ‘sublate themselves’ through an ‘internal determination from within a given moment operating on itself.’²⁴ This is absolutely key to understanding *Aufhebung* because we must recognize that no outside factor can cause the negating act, but only the two concepts (either concretely or abstractly) coming in union within themselves. No outside factor can cause this sublation, nor can another factor play catalyst to their unionizing: they come together, negate and preserve, and elevate by their own attraction. This may not be applicable to pure, indeterminate being and nothingness, which are abstract concepts that Hegel uses to convey a particular thought, but, for our

purposes of understanding *Aufhebung*, is it key to remember that Hegel sees this movement as contained within the process itself.

In regards to the dialectic, this process of becoming can be reasonably deduced from determinate being to indeterminate being and non-being. The dialectic, in this manner, presupposes a negation within this becoming, where the process inherently posits a negation of another concept, in this case indeterminate being's negation of indeterminate non-being.²⁵ As David Gray Carlson notes, 'according to Dialectical Reason, Becoming has a second aspect. It is *ceasing-to-be* (*Verstehen*), which starts from Being and ends at Nothing. It concedes the Understanding's point that Nothing turns into Being. But it embarrasses the Understanding by pointing out that the opposite is just as true: Being turns into Nothing. It has "ceased to be."²⁶ 'Embarrassed,' here, is how dialectical reasoning challenges the Understanding by revealing what it has negated and, consequently, that this negation could have been an opposite movement from being to nothing.

Dialectical reasoning reveals the negative aspect of these movements within the *Aufhebung*, which allows one to deduce what has been negated. Just as speculative reasoning allows one to explore the act of 'becoming' in the *Aufhebung*, its counterpart, dialectical reasoning, allows one to explore the exact opposite by reasoning backwards from this act of becoming to discover what was negated, and what was preserved or elevated, in this process.²⁷ In regards to this negative aspect of the dialectic, Hegel states:

Taken quite generally, this determination can be taken to mean that what is at first *immediate* is therewith posited as *mediated*, as *referred* to an other, or that the universal is posited as a particular. The *second* universal that has thereby arisen is thus the *negative* of that first and, in view of subsequent developments, the *first negative*. From this negative side, the immediate has *perished* in the other; but the other is essentially not an *empty negative*, the *nothing* which is formally taken to be the result of dialectic, but is rather the *other of the first*, the *negative* of the *immediate*; it is therefore determined as the mediated – *contains as such the determination of the first* in it.²⁸

Dialectical reasoning matters in our exploration of Westphal's use of the *Aufhebung* since it shows how the *Aufhebung* can be deconstructed: rather than two opposing concepts moving to create a new idea, one can also reason from the final idea to the two opposing concepts which created it. Westphal's use of the *Aufhebung* works against this dialectical aspect in that what concepts he elevates, or suspends, into another concept cannot be dialectically reasoned back to the moment of sublation since they are not contradictory, antithetical concepts. For example, when Westphal claims that the teleological suspension of the ethical in *Fear and Trembling* is synonymous with the concept of *Aufhebung*, Westphal does not show how the ethical is directly antithetical to the religious and thus one cannot employ dialectical reasoning to reveal the moment of sublation of the ethical into the religious. His use of the term through Kierkegaard, as we shall see, lacks this opposition and thus is not exactly an *Aufhebung* in the Hegelian sense of the term. Rather, Westphal recontextualizes Hegel's *Aufhebung* so that he can employ it in his thinking and connect opposing (yet are still are not antithetical) concepts.

Through exploring Hegel's concept of determinate being, we have thus come to the following understanding of *Aufhebung*: two distinct, opposing and antithetical (hence, related) concepts pass through a moment together in which each immediately cancels out the other while also simultaneously preserving the essential, elemental 'concept' which formed the union in the first place. This preservation, while negating that which initially caused the opposition, elevates the essential, elemental concept in so much as what is preserved holds a different, rational status. This status, as seen in the example of a

determinate being, still holds a hint of the negation in so far as the primary opposites (pure being and pure nothing) can be dialectically traced back to the moment before the sublation (hence, why it is a speculative-rational moment). Clearly, this is a difficult term which resists a succinct definition, but the explanation and summary above has now given us enough of a foothold on the term for us to move onto how Westphal utilizes it and how he sees it working within the writings of others, particularly Kierkegaard who has often been labeled as Hegel's greatest critic and historical counterpoint.

Westphal's *Aufhebung*: a suspension of Hegel in Kierkegaard?

As we have previously noted, Westphal uses *Aufhebung* throughout his work and not only within Hegel. Some of his first uses of the term come from his work directly on Hegel in *Hegel, Freedom, and Modernity*. This book is a good starting point for our exploration of his use of *Aufhebung* since it will give us a baseline by revealing that his original use of the term is in line with Hegel's own use. Once we have confirmed Westphal's original comprehension of the *Aufhebung* in Hegel, we will then briefly examine how it works within Westphal's Kierkegaardian thought by dissecting the use of the term in his account of Kierkegaard's theory of stages. Once we see how it is used in his Kierkegaardian thought, we will then briefly touch upon its use in his philosophy as a whole. However, in keeping with our stated goal of seeing how Westphal appropriates his sources, we will not get into the deeper themes and ideas which run through these works. Rather, we will stick with an exploration of *Aufhebung* with only small explanations and summaries of the context in which it is used.

Merold Westphal's 1991 address to the Hegel Society of America, expanded upon and included as the tenth chapter to *Hegel, Freedom, and Modernity*, is an examination of Hegel's theory that society, in its proper function, is an *Aufhebung* of church (religion) and state articulated through the term *Sittlichkeit*.²⁹ He sets up this *Aufhebung* by quoting Hegel, stating that he repeatedly claims 'religion is the foundation of the state' and that 'the state is the foundation of religion.'³⁰ Not unlike Hegel's understanding of being and nothingness, both hold to the fact that the other is united but different, as in two sides of the same coin and without the other side, there is no coin. From these two quotes, Westphal then pivots from Hegel toward his own socio-historical context in 1991, at the end of both the Cold War and the Gulf War, in order to reflect upon what he sees as opposing yet inextricably linked forces at work within civil and political society.

Westphal articulates these opposing forces as 'old secularism' and 'new theocracy,' both of which inhabit the same respective placeholders as Hegel's concepts of state and religion.³¹ Westphal's aim in coining the term old secularism is that he wishes to highlight how the state's current movement toward 'absolutizing pre-ethical goods' – namely, pleasure (food, sex), wealth (materialism), and honor (social class, prestige) – is indeed an old thread which has been woven within the function of the state for some time; particularly in economics and politics.³² Autonomy, without moral (i.e. religious) constraints, emerges as the primary motivator of the state – as 'central to the pursuit of wealth and status' which also reveals that old secularism, in its deification of pleasure, wealth, and honor, is liable to the charge of idolatry itself. Or, in the case of its instrumental use of religion, it can often perversely fashion a god as an enabler of our desires.³³

In opposition to old secularism, Westphal describes a new theocracy arising as an 'ethico-religious' movement popularly known through its 'charismatic television personalities and massive, computerized direct-mail fund raisers' which became known as 'the Moral Majority,' a political movement in the 1980s and 1990s based upon religious,

‘family values’ type rhetoric.³⁴ Their emphasis on morality rather than religion puts them on equal footing with old secularism’s absolutization of pre-ethical goods (as mentioned above), thus setting up a ‘good versus evil’ narrative which makes the new theocracy the advocate for ‘right’ morality. Westphal, in line with his caveats toward using the term ‘old secularism,’ recognizes the differences between traditional theocracy and his use of the term here; he recognizes that none of these people wish to establish a state church, for example. However, he does note that ‘the spirit of theocracy is present’ in their political actions and influence, particularly in their appeal to religious authority and political action.³⁵

However, in their ethico-religious protest, the new theocracy echoes old secularism’s sectarian pursuit of personal interest by advocating a ‘selective morality,’ that is, a morality that only appeals to the tastes and causes that reflect their own.³⁶ They are against those aforementioned pre-ethical goods, but only selectively and when it is in their self-interest to do so. Therefore, in their distaste for old secularism’s sexual revolution, for example, the new theocracy comes out tenfold to protest, but when it comes to challenge other ethical offenses such as the unreserved pursuit of wealth and status, it actually *moralizes* those pursuits and reframes them as godly, making itself just as idolatrous.³⁷ The result of this idolization is an approving god for our personal pursuits where Westphal sarcastically exclaims, ‘God wants us to be rich, personally and nationally, and God wants us to have a bigger military budget, for we are the shining city set on a hill to save the world from the evil empire.’³⁸

Hegel enters the scene for Westphal via his notion of *Sittlichkeit*, which is a sublation of private, personal religion into a common sense of reason, which creates an ethical society; often expressed and understood through the customs and mores of that society. In the case of old secularism and new theocracy, Westphal notes that each opposes the other not as contradictions, where one ‘must be true, but as contraries, both of which may be, and in this case are, false.’³⁹ Through his prior quotations of Hegel that church and state must be separate but are also inseparable, Westphal first peels back any idea that Hegel would support a theocratic state, which runs contrary to his concept of freedom, the very essence of the state’s existence.⁴⁰ This results, more or less, in a comparative relationship between old secularity to Hegel’s concept of a purely secular state.

Yet just as the relationship is established, Westphal retreats from the notion that Hegel’s understanding of *Sittlichkeit* would support an entirely secular enterprise given that, just like the new theocracy, old secularism is ‘only selectively critical of the primacy given to pre-ethical goods.’⁴¹ Moreover, and again in line with the critique of new theocracy, old secularism – through its unchallenged elevation of certain pre-ethical goods such as pleasure, wealth, and honor – encourages a de facto ‘civil religion which hovers around the fringes of political life and in the churchly religion which hovers around the fringes of everyday life in general;’ paradoxically, and as foreshadowed by the critique of idolatry, old secularism has turned into a self-legitimizing religion whose foundation is just as inept as new theocracy.⁴² Thus, for Westphal, old secularity and new theocracy are contrary opposites but not such that the denial of one entails the affirmation of the other.

For Westphal, these oppositions show what can go awry when a society overly concerns itself with either being too secular or too religious: idolatrous self-legitimization and selective enforcement of principles⁴³ go unchecked in both, inevitably leading to an unjust and unequal society. In contradistinction, Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* gives the state an ethical foundation which unites the core principles of religious life with that of the greater society. With regards to old secularism and new theocracy, he utilizes the well-established

self-legitimizing nature which unites them to show that in their unity the inherent paradox – that each holds an opposing, cynically pious pursuit of selfish fulfillment – is cancelled out. What is preserved, however, is ‘the ethical,’ or the individual-communal desire for orchestrating a cohesive theory of governance.⁴⁴ Westphal argues that the ethical which is described here is a version of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*. Describing it as such, Westphal declares thus:

Correspondingly, the state is not to be the instrumentalism of the secular life but its *Aufhebung*. The universal principle of truth which is known in religion to permeate all the particular realms of national life, lest they be, in separation from the truth, barren, cursed like the fig tree without figs, appearance without reality. This critique of secularity of the old secularism is also the critique of its idolatry. The *Aufhebung* of secular life in the Hegelian state, whose foundation is religion, is the systematic de-absolutizing of pre-ethical goods and their subordination to and incorporation into a life determined by ethico-religious values.⁴⁵

For Westphal, old secularism and new theocracy are but current versions of an existing problem in modernity, and Hegel’s *Sittlichkeit*, ‘as the ethico-religious *Aufhebung* of pre-ethical goods into their truly human form’ serves as theory of the state which holds up the best of what these contrary movements have in common while negating their destructive self-interests. Note well that this negation/preservation happens *within* their unity and not by virtue of an outside source. What is significant for us is not Westphal’s correlation of contemporary politics and religion, nor his creative use of Hegel to describe them and to address a remedy through Hegel’s *Sittlichkeit* – though this does further expand upon the political concerns which permeate all of Westphal’s philosophy. Rather, what we can see here is an example of Westphal using Hegel’s *Aufhebung* in a manner somewhat faithful to Hegel himself. This is relevant because we now can see that his use of the term in his later work is intentional and deliberate and that he is, in the vein of despoilment, taking the term from Hegel and making it his own.⁴⁶

Now that we have established a baseline for his understanding of *Aufhebung*, let us transition toward how he uses it in more novel and personal instances by looking at his Kierkegaard scholarship. In what follows, we will briefly summarize Westphal’s reading of Kierkegaard’s teleological suspensions within his theory of stages. Once we understand how Westphal sees a direct link between *Aufhebung* in Hegel and the teleological suspension in Kierkegaard, we will then contrast this with our previous exploration of Hegel’s use of the term in order to show how Westphal has recontextualized the term for his own purposes.

Interestingly, Westphal’s primary use of *Aufhebung* centers on a critique of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* as the end point of our religiously based ethics. Throughout much of his scholarship, Westphal focuses on Kierkegaard’s critique against Hegelian ethics, and particularly against *Sittlichkeit* – which is a direct challenge to what we have detailed above. In numerous places, Westphal will directly relate *Sittlichkeit* to Christendom.⁴⁷ Moreover, Westphal often finds himself agreeing with Kierkegaard on the idea that one must go beyond *Sittlichkeit* (or, in Kierkegaard’s words, ‘the ethical’) to get to a truly religious-based morality which places faith in, and obedience toward, God above all political, secular ethical systems.

One of the surprising ways in which Westphal explores this critique of *Sittlichkeit* is through the interplay between Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous ‘authors.’ Westphal is always cognizant of Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous authorship and he always addresses each pseudonym as an individual voice in a much larger discussion.⁴⁸ In this vein, Westphal’s work addresses the Kierkegaardian corpus as a whole and as such he teases

out prevailing themes which run through it. It is as if Kierkegaard were performing a dialogue with himself and Westphal is moderating it for us readers.⁴⁹ Therefore, he sees author Judge William in *Either/Or* discussing Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*, which informs him of the idea of the ethical that is taken up by Johannes De Silentio in *Fear in Trembling*. Moreover, the teleological suspension in *Fear and Trembling* informs him of the teleological suspensions first seen in Frater Taciturnus' section in *Stages on Life's Way* and further expounded upon in Johannes Climacus' *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Lastly, all of these works culminate in Kierkegaard's self-authored *Works of Love*, where Kierkegaard details how the 'Love Commandment,' that you shall love God above all things and your neighbor as yourself, is the highest act of faith and a task of a lifetime. Thus, Westphal sees not just a dialogue that functions as (anti-)Hegelian commentary but one which reaches its conclusion through the voice of the primary author, Kierkegaard, himself.⁵⁰

With regards to our present concern with *Aufhebung*, Westphal introduces this through the account of marriage in *Either/Or*, in which he highlights how author Judge William describes the concept of sex within marriage as a form of ethical *Sittlichkeit*. For Judge William, this is where the sensual, pleasure-seeking desires of sex are 'ennobled' through marriage which is 'the transfiguration of the first love [i.e. esthetic love, sex] and not its annihilation.'⁵¹ In this sense, sexual pleasure is seen as a pre-ethical good which is *aufgehoben* in marriage as an ethical, or 'rightly ordered' act. Marriage elevates – transfigures even – sexual desire into something beautiful, just, and worthy. This is especially Hegelian and it leads Westphal to argue that Judge William is a Hegelian, 'whether he knows it or not.'⁵² In *Philosophy of Right*, for example, Hegel notes that 'marriage, as the elementary social relation, contains firstly the factor of natural life' and that 'marriage is essentially an ethical relation.'⁵³ He goes on to remark that various accounts of marriage's relation to the foundation of the state are inadequate because they do not take into view the loving aspect of the relationship. Additionally, traditional thoughts on love as the foundation of marriage are also woefully inadequate.⁵⁴ This leads Hegel to remark that 'the ethical side of marriage consists in the consciousness that the union is a substantive end. Marriage thus rests upon love, confidence, and the socializing of the whole individual existence.'⁵⁵ Thus, it is an *Aufhebung* of the pre-ethical sexual desire, transfigured in love between the couple and ennobled in duty towards the family and state.

According to Westphal, this is exactly the form of the ethical which is teleologically suspended in *Fear and Trembling*, where author Johannes De Silentio remarks that Abraham must suspend the ethical in order to follow God's command to sacrifice Isaac. According to Westphal, de Silentio's commentary in *Fear and Trembling* marks the 'transition from the ethical to the religious' where 'Judge William falls short of the religious' through his fidelity to the ethical. His adherence to *Sittlichkeit* can only take him so far, and it definitely cannot take him with Abraham toward Mount Moriah. The ethical, therefore, must be teleologically suspended in order for this journey to happen. On this matter, Westphal is explicit, stating that this suspension is 'nothing but a Hegelian *Aufhebung*, in this case the relativizing of the ethical by recontextualizing it within the religious as its higher principle. But while the form of this teleological suspension is Hegelian, its content is anti-Hegelian, for it is an all-out assault on the Hegelian understanding of *Sittlichkeit*.'⁵⁶

How de Silentio remedies the epistemological ramifications of suspending the ethical – a mediated, reasoned ethics – into the religious is beyond our current scope.⁵⁷ What is important to us now is that this becomes the paradigm for how Westphal sees the

subsequent teleological suspensions in Kierkegaard's writings. Westphal elaborates on this particular form of *Aufhebung*:

...Another Hegelian name for such mediation is *Aufhebung*; in the language of *Fear and Trembling*, we are talking about a teleological suspension. In both cases the process of recontextualization has negative and positive implications, cancellation and preservation. When X is *aufgehoben*, or teleologically suspended in Y, the immediate, self-sufficient form of X is canceled, and whatever belongs to that mode of its being is relativized as something insufficient by itself. But this has positive significance, for the claim is that Y is the truth, or *telos*, of X, and that in this process X realizes itself, or at least moves to a higher level of its normative development.⁵⁸

Westphal sees an X which is taken up and recontextualized within Y which thereby cancels or negates the *telos* of X – the true purpose or end goal for X, in this case a social ethics which bases justice and righteousness upon the highest good through men⁵⁹ – while preserving some aspect of X. In other words, the aim of the ethical towards the good and righteous is preserved, recontextualized, and *taken up* into the religious. The self's walk towards righteousness falls short in and of itself due to humanity's fallen nature; however, when the self surrenders its claim on righteousness to God, then and only then can it truly feel that it is on the path towards righteousness because the self is following God first and its own intellect second. This is why Abraham takes up his task and follows God's command towards Mount Moriah.

Two things are striking about Westphal's reading: First, it is remarkable and enlightening to see how Kierkegaard undoes Hegel's work through Hegel himself. This reading of Kierkegaard reveals the Dane's ingenious wit and clever critique by at once showing how Hegel is the greatest philosopher of them all while also showing that Hegel is still but a fallen man when compared to God and revelation.⁶⁰ In this way, Hegel is not wrong but he is not right either; his concepts of *Sittlichkeit* and *Aufhebung* are correct when he talks about taking up and elevating a base notion, such as pre-ethical desires, but they fail once they mistake the true *telos* of the self (or selves) as free, ethical communal living, when it is in truth to love God above all things and to love your neighbor as yourself.⁶¹

This leads to the second striking element of Westphal's reading: that this is not *really* an *Aufhebung* in the strict Hegelian sense. In this reading, X and Y are not paradoxes of each other. Nowhere in Westphal's account (nor in Kierkegaard's) is the religious or anything else paradoxically equated but contrary to the ethical. In Hegel's account of becoming, pure nothingness and pure being were exactly contraries. In his account of *Sittlichkeit*, this was somewhat or partially so in that private religious sentiment and secular social ethics were equal in their aims (how should I live?) but contrary in their executions and goals. But in the teleological suspension of the ethical – if it is indeed *Sittlichkeit* as Westphal argues – the religious is hardly on par with the ethical as an opposing force and making it into a dialectic somewhat softens Kierkegaard's critique of the ethical.

Westphal's rebuttal to this, I imagine, would follow that it *was* on par once Abraham received the command from God. 'Should I follow what I've been told is right – which is to not kill my children,' Abraham would have said to himself, 'or should I follow what my God tells me to do, with the hope that God will give Abraham back to me or somehow make this all ok?' Westphal might argue that this dilemma poses *Sittlichkeit* and the ethical against the religious command to follow God. At the onset, this makes sense: *Sittlichkeit* is negated but is preserved in the justness of God and the religious is also

thereby lifted into righteousness because it suspends all human ethics within faith and duty toward God. This is indeed tenable and possible.

However, is it tenable throughout Kierkegaard scholarship? That is a much more difficult question. As we have previously covered, Westphal argues that this teleological suspension is a paradigm which Kierkegaard follows throughout his work, particularly in his theory of stages (or, as it is alternately called, spheres of existence). Recall that the esthetic (pre-ethical) is teleologically suspended in the ethical, which is then suspended in Religiousness A, which is then suspended in Religiousness B, and finally completed in Religiousness C. For Westphal, all of these follow the exact same pattern of suspension/*Aufhebung* as seen in de Silentio's *Fear and Trembling*. But again, what are the contraries in these patterns?⁶² The critical questions thus become: How and in what way does X negate Y? And, once Y has taken up X, from where can we *logically deduce* this moment of sublation? Furthermore, it appears as if Westphal's use of *Aufhebung* often forgets the necessity of negation in the process. It almost reads quasi-eschatological where all things get taken up or otherwise reconciled into a higher, (more) complete purpose. Is there an actual negation happening in an *Westphalian Aufhebung* or is it all merely suspension? Sometimes it can be hard to tell.

In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard addresses Hegel's use of *Aufhebung* as a philosophical term through the pseudonym Johannes Climacus. Exploring Climacus' critique thus should provide clarification in regards to how Kierkegaard himself perceived the relationship between his teleological suspension and Hegel's *Aufhebung*. Following Hegel, Climacus places the concept within the realm of subjective thinking and inward speculation, and then he focuses on how it is perceived in Christian thinking and particularly in relation to the paradox of Christianity. What is at stake, for Climacus, is how the concept of *Aufhebung*, through its suspension of 'various and indeed opposite meanings,' functions as an explanation of paradox, which thus renders Christianity as something one can reasonably understand.⁶³ In regards to Christianity, Hegel's *Aufhebung* represents a hubristic attempt to logically grasp the truth held within the paradox of Jesus Christ. The speculative nature of *Aufhebung*, Climacus argues, reduces the paradox to a relation of opposites, which makes the paradox logical, thus no longer rendering it as a paradox. 'But suppose,' Climacus states, 'that we let the word *aufheben* mean reduction to a relative factor, as indeed it does when what is decisive, the paradox, is reduced to a relative factor. What this says is that there is no paradox, no decision, for the paradox and the decisive are what they are precisely by being unyielding.'⁶⁴ For Climacus, the problem with this form of speculation, as employed within Hegel's concept of *Aufhebung*, is not that it renders Christianity, and the paradox of Jesus as divine yet man (the primary paradox of Christianity, for Climacus), as false or untrue. It is quite the opposite. Climacus' primary concern is that *such speculation has the audacity to believe that it can grasp and logically understand this paradox, thus missing the point of Christianity altogether*.⁶⁵ Relating this back to our exploration of determinate being in the prior section, Climacus might agree with Hegel that there is a paradox between the relation of being and non-being; however, he would criticize the reduction of becoming, or of the creation of determinate being, into this simple act of negation-preservation. There is more happening, for Climacus, in becoming than a simple movement of being passing over into non-being. While Hegel himself acknowledges that this is an abstract understanding of being, it still attempts to know too much, and it assumes that the paradox can be understood – thus making it no longer a paradox.

Climacus argues that this is a matter of gullibility. Specifically regarding Christianity, these thinkers of great intellect have mistaken their logic as *the truth* rather than the actual truth of the paradox of Christianity, which comes almost as a natural acceptance for the average Christian.⁶⁶ One might kindly say that they have over thought the paradox, in a less charitable fashion, one might argue that they have tried to seize the truth of Christianity as their own:

For Christianity as it is understood by the speculator differs from what plain folk are presented. [For the plain folk] it is a paradox, but the speculator knows how to suspend the paradox. So it is not the Christianity that is, was and remains the truth, and the speculator's understanding is not that Christianity is the truth; no, Christianity's truth is the speculator's understanding of Christianity. *The understanding is thus something other than the truth*; it is not that once the understanding has understood everything contained in the truth, then truth is understood... The truth is not first given and its understanding what one then awaits; *what is awaited is the completion of the speculative understanding as that which alone can bring about the truth*. Speculative knowledge thus differs from knowledge in general, as something indifferent to what is known, so that the latter does not change by being known but stays the same. No, speculative knowledge is itself the object of knowing.⁶⁷

Climacus thus makes it clear that he has concerns about the use of *Aufhebung* to properly understand the paradox of Christianity, and this perhaps explains why he forgoes the use of the term in describing his theory of stages. It would be philosophically inconsistent to critique the speculator's use of *Aufhebung* to remove, or to 'render out,' the logical impossibility of the paradox, and then to go on to explain how one arrives at the paradox of Christianity through a process of stages which are *aufgehoben* in each other. This reveals a particular concern missing in Westphal's argument that the teleological suspension and *Aufhebung* are synonymous concepts: he does not explain why, if this is true, Kierkegaard opted to call these transitions teleological suspensions. As one can see with the passage above, Climacus' concern with *Aufhebung* runs parallel to De Silentio's concern against *Sittlichkeit*: Hegel is not wrong, but he is not right either. Through *Aufhebung*, Hegel and his followers make the correct observation there is a dialectical relation between opposing concepts, but they fool themselves once they mistake this observation as a method to understand, explain, or grasp the full truth of the paradox within this dialectical relation, particularly and especially within the paradox of Christianity and the dual nature of Jesus.

Westphal has received similar critiques from Jack Mulder, who argues against Westphal's belief that the teleological suspension completes any dialectical movement in and of itself, and Henry Piper, who argues that Westphal is wrongly fashioning Kierkegaard as a quasi-Hegelian.⁶⁸ Mulder and Piper's arguments vary, but the covalent element of their critique is Westphal's use of Hegel to understand Kierkegaard: either Westphal reads Kierkegaard's pseudonyms too dialectically, as if they are Hegelian progressions of Kierkegaard's thinking, or he reads the teleological suspensions too dialectically, as if the suspensions themselves 'complete' the progression on life's way or that the self can otherwise 'return' to a respective sphere as if it were a Hegelian dialectic.⁶⁹ In Westphal's rebuttal, he does not revise his position but essentially retraces his steps as we have detailed above.⁷⁰ Debates about the proper reading of Kierkegaard aside, what is important to our own investigation comes into view when Westphal addresses Piper's concern that Kierkegaard is not a Hegelian:

So [after restating/proving that Kierkegaard is indeed using Hegelian themes, as seen with Judge William], a more careful formulation than “Kierkegaard is not Hegelian” would be that Kierkegaard is not *substantively* Hegelian even when he (or his pseudonyms) employ Hegelian forms. *The question is about the how: are these forms employed as Hegel employs them?* Piper understands this when distinguishing the ‘logical dialectic of Hegel from the ‘non-dialectical,’ ‘existential’ dialectic of Kierkegaard. The difference is between a dialectic in which differences are ‘mediated’ and brought to ‘resolution’ and one in which they remain in ‘tension’ and ‘paradox.’⁷¹

Hegel does not have the final say on how Hegel’s concepts can be used, according to Westphal. To say that something is ‘Hegelian’ does not have to mean that it is Hegelian in the proper sense: the dialectic does not need to find resolution but can be in tension and taken up by another *Aufhebung*. Here, Westphal reveals himself as a despoiler of Hegel. Hegel no longer has control over these concepts, and while we should understand and be mindful of the way in which Hegel himself used these terms, we can see that their use is not merely limited to a rigorous use of them. This is not to say that we can do whatever we want with concepts such as *Aufhebung*, for indeed they do have a legacy and to ignore their original use is to abuse them. A proper appropriation is mindful of this legacy while exploring its possibilities; appropriation explores the tension within the concept’s original meaning and context in relation to our own while not breaking it. Lastly, this existing tension explores the elasticity of the term up by placing its original meaning in relation to a contemporary, evolving usage: *Hegel’s Aufhebung is taken up by Kierkegaard’s usage of the term (and in Kierkegaard’s critique of Hegel) which is then taken up by Westphal and his own philosophy.*

Stepping back for a moment, is this not what Hegel did with the term *Aufhebung* itself? In our first exploration of Hegel’s use, we noted that he himself regarded the common German usage of the term insightful itself and he philosophically exploited the term. He took the term in its everyday form and explored its philosophical ‘usefulness’ to understanding how things are; thereby cancelling out its everyday usage for a higher purpose. The everyday, common *Aufhebung* is – once its paradox is genuinely reflected upon – *aufgehoben* into a philosophical *Aufhebung*! The unity of the sublation here is the notion of paradox itself: on the one hand from the common, everyday perspective in which contrary actions have practical meaning (to pick up a fallen book), and on the other side from a theoretical perspective in which paradoxes have a different but similar meaning (to say yes and no to the same question, such as: ‘Is Jesus Christ a man or God?’). The fact that the sublation itself happens *within* the term itself and with no external additions (or, in this case, prefixes or suffixes) completes this idea.

Now, it would be perfectly sane to argue that this notion is grasping at straws and that this is a bit of linguistic sophistry – a charge that has been levied by several against Hegel himself.⁷² Additionally, it could be argued that stretching a term to its limits – or, as I did above, turning a term against itself – is bad philosophy in the sense that it eschews rigor and fidelity for a (faulty) attempt at finding meaning and understanding. Philosophy requires and demands from its practitioners a certain rigor in order to prevent concepts from falling into etymological word-play and nonsense.

Westphal, for his part, does not see this as softening or weakening rigor for the sake of finding understanding.⁷³ Rather, it is about being mindful of the sources and then recognizing the tension *already within the term itself*. Throughout his Kierkegaard scholarship, Westphal has, with remarkable consistency, characterized the connections and tensions between Kierkegaard and Hegel, and his prior expertise in Hegel is undoubtedly the catalyst to this reading. It ultimately comes down to whether you find

his claims convincing or not. Moreover, his own philosophy of religion may hinge upon whether or not you grant him this understanding of *Aufhebung* since it runs throughout all of his work and indeed even builds the structure of his work.

Desmond is right to claim that Westphal uses *Aufhebung* to do work – profound and benign work – for him and that there is a degree of appropriation/despoilment within his use of the term and in his philosophy as a whole. But he does not arrive at this on the cheap: there is still a great admiration towards the Pharaoh and towards his sources and he does not blindly take from them. Rather, as Desmond notes, it is a gentle and agreeable despoilment. Yet, unlike the Pharaoh/Israel metaphor employed here, this is always a three part dialogue between X, Y, and Westphal himself. The term *dialogue* could not be more important, because for Westphal, what is happening here is grounded in hermeneutics which at once appropriates but also sticks close to its source: ‘*what does X say to Y, what is or would be negated in their dialogue, and what could be taken up from it into my own thought?*’ Westphal’s philosophy is, therefore, always a recontextualization of his sources into something else, something higher. However, it is a particular type of recontextualization, it is a *Westphalian Aufhebung*.

Notes

1. Westphal, *Hegel, Freedom, and Modernity*. This book will heretofore be referenced as *HFM*. On the very first page, Westphal abruptly declares that we are all still modernists: ‘Hegel has exploded from oblivion (in the English-speaking world) to regain a major place in the philosophical canon [which] has also been a time in which modernity has become increasingly problematic to us moderns. . . . I speak of us as moderns because I cannot deny my modernity any more than I can deny my Americanness’ (*HFM*, vii).

This is evident throughout his work, particularly when he treats Kierkegaard as a post-modernist and when he discusses the role of suspicion in philosophy as a phenomenon which began in modernity itself, not something that came after modernity (for examples, see: Westphal, ‘Johannes and Johannes: Kierkegaard and Difference’, 13–16; ‘Appropriating Postmodernism’ and ‘Nietzsche as a Theological Resource’ in *OCOT*).

2. Putt, *Gazing Through a Prism Darkly*, 21–3. This book will heretofore be referenced as *GTPD*. Desmond, in a meaningful turn of phrase, references the despoilment of the Egyptians by the Israelites (Exodus 3:21–2, 11:2–3, 12:35–6, and Psalm 105:37) who carried Egyptian treasure with them during their flight from Egypt. His intent, here, is playful but also evocative of Westphal’s roots in scripture and the relationship he has between his biblical faith and his politics.
3. On 26 of *GTPD*, Desmond elaborates that there is indeed still a critique in Westphal’s engagement, but in taking aspects of his subject’s thought up into his own, he changes the nature of the critique: ‘After all, even gently despoiling the Egyptians is still despoiling, and none of this would be possible at all did not need assert itself to escape the land of Pharaoh [i.e. to leave an author behind]. To be critical is not necessarily to wish to be done with the one who is opposed. . . . There can be a kind of *adieu* in criticism, but *adieu* is not only a good-bye; it is also a kind of blessing.’
4. *GTPD*, 23.
5. Here are three key examples where Westphal plainly states that the teleological suspension and the *Aufheben* are similar, if not essentially the same concept:

‘A teleological suspension is not a reduction. It does not say that X is nothing but Y. It is rather an *Aufhebung*. It says that X can only be properly understood in relation to Y, that X is not a substance in Spinoza’s sense, something that “in itself is conceived through itself” (*Ethics* I, Def. 3).’ From: Westphal, *Levinas and Kierkegaard in Dialogue*, 47. This book will heretofore be referenced as *LKD*.

‘I take Hegel’s *Aufhebung* and Kierkegaard’s teleological suspension to be closely related ways of speaking about recontextualizing the abstract in the more fully concrete setting that is its proper home. The earlier stages are not abandoned but are required to abandon any pretense

of finality or self-sufficiency.' Westphal, *Transcendence and Self-Transcendence*, 11 fn 29. This book will heretofore be referenced as *TST*.

'For like the ethical, the religious involves the replacing of a chasm with a chiasm. And he might well have spoken of faith as a mediation, for *Aufhebung* and teleological suspension are different names for the same structure.' (Westphal, 'Kierkegaard and the Role of Reflection in Second Immediacy,' 174.)

6. Calling this a '*Westphalian Aufhebung*' should not conflate Merold Westphal's thought with the Germanic region of Westphalia or the treaty, The Peace of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years' War. The neologism is used here to separate Merold Westphal's *Aufhebung* from Hegel's own usage and those who use it in Hegel's own manner. Thus the connection between Westphal's surname and the area is coincidental and the author of this essay is not connecting him to the region or the Peace of Westphalia.
7. Palm, *Hegel's Concept of Sublation: A Critical Interpretation*, 1–2, 8, 13–15. In: http://limo.libis.be/primo_library/libweb/action/dlSearch.do?dscent=1&onCampus=true&query=any%2Ccontains%2CRalph+Palm&tab=default_tab&dstmp=1399893533029&dym=true&q=1399893532.58500&highlight=true&lang=eng&search_scope=Lirias&indx=1&bulkSize=10&vid=Lirias&institution=ASSOC&fromLogin=true (accessed 12 May 2014). Ralph Palm's work was a valuable resource in understanding Hegel's meaning of this term and his dissertation is a vital resource – along with Hegel and Westphal themselves – for our exploration. With regards to its resistance towards translation, Palm gives a valuable anecdote (p. 1 fn. 2) in which the translators of Geraets, Suchting, and Harris had such a dispute over translating the term in Hegel's *Encyclopaedia Logic* that they had to produce two different introductions to the work. See: Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, xxvi, xxxv–xxxvi. See also: Palm, 'Hegel's Contradictions'.
8. For the sake of clarity, I will continue to use only *Aufhebung* except when specifically discussing its other forms, since Westphal's own work often refers to the term as *Aufhebung*.
9. Palm, *Hegel's Concept of Sublation*, 8. The three instances are: PS, 68 (HW 3/94-TM); EL, 154 (HW 8/204–205); SL, 107 (HW/114). The third of these instances pertains to the differences between the first and second editions of the *Science of Logic*. Note that this is Hegel's *explanation of the term*, not its usage!
10. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 82 (SL 107; HW 5/114-EA), emphasis mine. In order to give easy references to those who are not Hegel specialists, I will cite direct quotations from Di Giovanni's new translation of the *Science of Logic* while also making every effort to cite other translations when referencing secondary sources such as Ralph Palm.
11. Kaufmann, *Hegel: A Reinterpretation*. Taken from Palm, *Hegel's Concept of Sublation*, 9.
12. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. Di Giovanni, 82 (SL 107 [HW 5/114-EA]).
13. Palm, *Hegel's Concept of Sublation*, 30. The use of *Aufhebung* here is understood as speculative or infinite reasoning, according to Hegel, in so far as its relation to thinking and metaphysics. In *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, Hegel distinguishes infinite reason from the finite reason that dominated philosophy prior to Kant. This finite form of reasoning had not yet understood what reason could or could not do (which is why Kant's critique of reason was so important for Hegel), and thus took for granted that one could reason about things-in-themselves with no attention to their predicates or relation to other things (EL §26–27). 'The presupposition of the older metaphysics,' Hegel summarizes, 'was that of the naïve belief generally, namely, that thinking grasps what things are *in-themselves*, that things only are what they genuinely are when they are [captured] in thought' (EL §28Z). In this manner, older metaphysics took up 'the abstract determinations of thought immediately,' which allowed the thinker to consider these predicates – these attachments to the thing-in-itself under consideration – as a part of what makes the thing a thing, what makes it 'true' as a thing in relation to the thinker (EL §28Z).

In contrast, speculative thought after Kant opens the thing in question to be considered from an 'infinite form of reason' by expressing that the thing in question has certain qualities that cannot 'be brought to consciousness through what is finite;' i.e. the thinker cannot fully bring about the abstract qualities of the thing in question through rationalization (EL §28Z). Infinite thinking thus turns inward toward speculation, and sublates this acknowledgment of finite thinking, accepting its limitations – what reason can and cannot do – while also cancelling these limitations in respect to finite thinking's naiveté (that it can think of things-in-themselves), which allows the thinker to proceed toward an infinite speculation of the thing in itself.

In this way, one transitions from thinking about things-in-themselves to thinking about thinking, which thus makes this an infinite form of thinking for Hegel: there is no limiting opposition when one is thinking about thinking since no object stands over against cognition as that which is not-cognition. Thus, Hegel states: 'Infinite or speculative thinking, on the contrary [to finite thinking's restriction to determinations], makes determinations likewise, but, in determining, in limiting, it sublates this defect again. Infinity must not be interpreted as an abstract, ever-receding beyond' but in a simple manner of negation of limitation while cognizant of those limitations (EL §28Z). Quotes are from: Hegel, GWF, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*.

14. SL 82; HW 5/82; Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 48, 59.
15. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 48.
16. *Ibid.*, 59.
17. *Ibid.*
18. By 'intuitive meaning,' Hegel is referring to the initial, primal meaning of being and nothingness. Intuition, and the verb intuit, refer to the basic meaning of these terms: that being connotes that some-thing exists, and that nothing connotes that no-one-thing exists.
19. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 60.
20. *Ibid.*, 60–82. See also Palm, *Hegel's Concept of Sublation*, 42–56.
21. Palm, *Hegel's Concept of Sublation*, 51. Location here is to be understood as the paradox's position within the logical sequence of becoming.
22. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 60 (cf. Palm, *Hegel's Concept of Sublation*, 51; Hegel, SL 83; HW 5/83-EA).
23. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 80 (SL 105; HW 5/112-EA). Palm references this on 53–4, remarking that 'the determinate unity of being and nothing found in the transition to becoming is thus constituted by sublation.'
24. Palm, *Hegel's Concept of Sublation*, 56.
25. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 741–4.
26. Carlson, *A Commentary on Hegel's Science of Logic*, 21.
27. See: Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 744–6.
28. *Ibid.*, 744 (12.245).
29. *HFM*, 165.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*, 166.
32. *Ibid.* In an aside on 166, Westphal readily admits that this is not the standard definition of secularism and that by calling the concept in question old secularism his intention is 'to call attention to an important observable feature of the secularization process,' namely its relationship to the adage, 'if God is dead everything is permitted.'
33. *HFM*, 168–169. On the point of idolatry, Westphal argues this is particularly clear in the case of 'nuclear nationalism,' where 'we are prepared to incinerate millions. . . simply because they happen to belong to another people.' Invoking the term holocaust, a religious word used to denote burnt offerings and sacrifices for personal sins, he argues that it now stands for a sacrifice to a different god: 'If we ask who is the god to whom human life on this unprecedented scale, along with human civilization and the earth's atmosphere, are to be sacrificed, the answer is clear: the nation' (169).
34. This American political movement was very popular in the 1980's through the 1990's – even so much that then Vice President Dan Quayle evoked it when reprimanding the television character Murphy Brown (in the eponymously titled show, 'Murphy Brown') for having a baby out of wedlock. While Westphal's example is dated, it still remains relevant given the rise of popular conservative cable television news stations and conservative radio programs which still trace their roots back to the so-called Moral Majority. For a history of its origins in the 1980's, see: Bromley, and Shupe, *New Christian Politics*, 'Part II: Sources of Social Support for the New Christian Right,' 61–113. For the specifically televangelical bent of this movement, see Banwart, 'Jerry Falwell, the Rise of the Moral Majority, and the 1980 Election,'.
35. *HFM*, 170.
36. *Ibid.*, 172.
37. It appears, at least in this essay, that Westphal anticipated the 'prosperity gospel' movement that emerged in the United States of America just a decade after this publishing.
38. *HFM*, 172.

39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., 172–4.
41. Ibid., 177.
42. Ibid.
43. Westphal goes on to call this a sectarian epistemology in order to denote that it is not just society turning a blind eye towards its own principles, but it somehow comes to *know* and *understand* the world only through this self-interested selectivity. We not only see what we want to see, but our self-interest fools us into thinking that this is all there is to see; ‘this is how the world works,’ we tell ourselves while being immune to knowing any alternatives. ‘Even if,’ Westphal states, ‘by accident, this does not happen at the level of social . . . praxis, it has always already happened at the level of theory and of ‘truth’ insofar as the foundations remain epistemologically sectarian. Society as a whole is subjected to rules which can be expected to make sense only to those socialized into one of its subcultures’ (*HFM*, 174).
44. *HFM*, 178.
45. Ibid.
46. Stepping back for a moment, let us look at Westphal’s source material on religion’s role in the state, which is primarily found in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, in order to evaluate his grasp of the term. In Section 270, Hegel details his notion of the state where, in the additional remark (*Zusatz*), he notes that religion has its problems as a tool of indifference or, at worse, oppression for people. However, religion’s necessity to the state can be seen ‘when we go back to their conception,’ or before religion is *taken up* by the state (Hegel, *GW* *Philosophy of Right*, 206). ‘Religion has as its content absolute truth,’ Hegel continues, ‘and, therefore, also the highest kind of feeling’ (*Philosophy of Right*, 206). Religion’s orientation towards absolute truth found in God, as the ‘unlimited basis and cause of all things,’ lends itself to becoming the foundation of the state’s ethics. On the other hand, the purely secular state concerns itself with laws and duties, Hegel argues, which lends the ethical system its determinate reality. ‘Religion, so interpreted,’ Hegel concludes, ‘is the foundation of the ethical system, and contains the nature of the state as the divine will; yet it is only the foundation. This is the point at which the state and religion separate. The state is the divine will as a present spirit, which unfolds itself in the actual shape of an organized world’ (*Philosophy of Right*, 207). Hegel, here, is explicating the ethical system as an *Aufhebung* of religion and the secular state, which Westphal then takes as the paradigm for his ‘old secularism and new theocracy.’
47. *LKD*, 133: ‘Similarly, Kierkegaard’s positive account of the self is in ethical terms, for example the absolute duty to God with which Silentio explicates the teleological suspension of *Sittlichkeit* and Christendom.’ Additionally the following works will be referenced with the corresponding initials: Westphal, *Kierkegaard’s Critique of Religion and Society*, will be cited as *KCRS*; Westphal, *Becoming a Self*, will be cited as *BS*.
For more references, see also: *LKD*, 53–4, 72, 105, 106, 133–6, Fn. 18 on 160; *KCRS*, 76–82, 109; *BS*, 29. These are but a few examples of a reoccurring theme.
48. Westphal, intentionally or unintentionally, is quite consistent on how he introduces his concept of Kierkegaard’s teleological suspensions; it is as if he is always taking the minority position – or at least talking to non-Kierkegaardian scholars – and therefore has to explicate it nearly every time. Fortunately, for our purposes, this creates a pattern which I detail in this paragraph. To simplify things, we will primarily examine Westphal’s thought through *Becoming a Self*.
To see the pattern yourself, please see the following examples: *LKD*, 53–7; *BS*, 24–9, 91–3, 115–23, 154–8, 160–7, 194–9; *KCRS*, 30–32, 76–83; *TST*, 207–13, 217–19; Westphal, ‘Johannes and Johannes: Kierkegaard and Difference’, 14–15, 19–25, 13–31; Westphal, ‘Kierkegaard and Hegel’, 76–101 (This essay, in addition to describing the complicated relationship between these two thinkers, excellently describes how Westphal’s sees the connections/dialogue between Kierkegaard’s ‘authors’ which develops into a cohesive narrative and discussion on Hegelian concepts such as *Sittlichkeit* and *Aufhebung*).
For supporting instances, see also: Westphal, ‘Kierkegaard’s Teleological Suspension of Religiousness B’, 111–14; Westphal, ‘Kierkegaard’s Religiousness C: A Defense’, 546–8; Westphal, ‘Abraham and Sacrifice’, 320–1; Westphal, ‘Kierkegaard on Language and Spirit’, 78–9 [see also the dialogue between Westphal and other scholars on 87–8].

49. For further elaboration on how these pseudonyms dialogue with each other, see: Westphal, Merold, 'Johannes and Johannes: Kierkegaard and Difference.'
50. Note the Hegelian character of Westphal's reading of these 'authors.' For reference, the first three chapters of *Becoming a Self* set the stage for Westphal's method of reading Kierkegaard's pseudonyms, see especially: *BS*, 20–1, 25–6, 29–30. With regards to Kierkegaard having the final say in *Works of Love*, Westphal will come to call this Religiousness C, see: *BS*, 194–200.
51. *BS*, 24–25; He is quoting from Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Part II*, 31. See also *Either/Or Part II*, 21, 30, 56–7, 61, 94, 253.
52. Westphal, 'Kierkegaard and Hegel,' 106.
53. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §161; Westphal also uses this example of Marriage in *HFM*, 179–80.
54. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §162.
55. *Ibid.*, §163.
56. *BS*, 26. For a restatement of this same principle, see: *BS*, 39.
57. See *BS*, 27–9, 62–4; *KCRS*, Chapter 6, 'Kierkegaard and the Logic of Insanity; *LKD*, Chapter 3, "Teleological Suspensions."
58. *BS*, 145. The context in which Westphal raises this *Aufhebung*/teleological suspension comparison is in discussing the relationship between *Philosophical Fragments* and its postscript/ sequel, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. On 303–9 of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Cambridge Edition, 2009), Climacus – the author of both works – discusses the relationship between Hegel and Christendom, particularly as regards 'becoming' a Christian through baptism. The issue at hand is whether simply performing a ritual, such as infant baptism, can actually legitimate the act of becoming Christian – the child has no say in the matter and plenty of people have their children baptized merely because it is a custom. This raises concerns for Climacus (and echoed by Westphal on 144–8 of *Becoming a Self*), about the role of mediation in faith, particularly with respect to *Sittlichkeit* and its 'regulating' of faith. See: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Chapter 4, Section 1.
59. The use of 'men' here is intentional since this ethics, *Sittlichkeit* (at least in Westphal's view) is often shaded in the biases and prejudices of the people who formed it. This means it is often prejudiced toward particular races, genders, social classes and so on.
60. In 'Kierkegaard and Hegel,' (102) Westphal deftly draws this out to show how Kierkegaard is simultaneously mocking and praising Hegel through his allegory of the dancer who could leap so high that he thought he could fly (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 124). Here the dancer represents Hegel (for Westphal) and the dancer can clearly leap higher than any other dancer, much to his praise. To his downfall, however, he actually believes that his leaps give birth to flight.
61. Westphal's Kierkegaard is a Lutheran through and through: the self is lost when it forgets that its soul faulted and can only be saved when its aim is toward loving and following God.
62. For example, when Religiousness A – a religious sentiment which aims for the divine yet settles in self-legitimization/*Sittlichkeit* – is taken up by Religiousness B – a Christ-centered religiousness, which focuses the believer towards living a Christ-like life – does it negate anything within Jesus Christ or his teachings?
63. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 186.
64. *Ibid.*, 187.
65. On 187 in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Climacus states thus: 'Speculation says by no means that Christianity is untruth; on the contrary, it says that speculation grasps its truth.' This, for Kierkegaard, is the greatest act of hubris one can have (see: 189–96).
66. While Climacus here regards this 'average Christian' as 'plain folk,' this is partially untrue; in various places Kierkegaard will recall the difficulty that all Christians face in accepting the paradox of Christianity and of Jesus' nature, which is why Religiousness B comes at the end of his theory of stages. However, here he is using the term as an idealized concept – like the term 'simple soul' which he will use on 191 – to distance his concept of the true Christian believer from the Danish Hegelians and their Christendom, who are the primary targets of his critique.
67. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 187–8, emphasis is mine.
68. Mulder, 'Re-radicalizing Kierkegaard: An Alternative to Religiousness C'; Piper, 'Kierkegaard's Non-Dialectical Dialectic or That Kierkegaard is not Hegelian', 496–518.

69. Mulder, 'Re-Radicalizing Kierkegaard,' 304, 309, 311–12, 314, 321; Piper, 'Kierkegaard's Non-Dialectical Dialectic,' 498–9, 503, 510–18.
70. Westphal, 'Kierkegaard's Religiousness C.' For example, Westphal asks 'is it not evident that a teleological suspension has the form of an Hegelian *Aufhebung*?' and that while 'Judge William does not use the language of teleological suspension or *Aufhebung*, ... the structure is plainly visible, the same structure that [de] Silentio calls a teleological suspensions in a case where it is the ethical (society's requirements) that is relativized *vis-à-vis* the religious (God's requirement)' (546).
71. Westphal, 'Kierkegaard's Religiousness C: A Defense,' 547, emphasis is mine.
72. Also, picking up a fallen book is not *completely* paradoxical, but I stand with Kaufmann in believing that this is typical of the everyday usage of the term.
73. 'There is something (formally) Hegelian in my account of Kierkegaard's dialectic, but if by 'temporizing' is meant a softening that calls for a re-radicalization of Kierkegaard, as it clearly does for Piper, I ask the court for a verdict of directed acquittal on the grounds that a plausible *prima facie* case has not been made' (Westphal, 'Kierkegaard's Religiousness C: A Defense', 547–8).

Notes on contributor

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